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The Palenque War Panel: Commentary on the Inscription

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The Text

Sentence 1:

A1-B1: The text begins with a Calendar Round of which the day sign K'an and 12 Mak are clear. Since placement of this date in the Long Count is a little difficult, I will explain the criteria I have used and hope that someone will find better evidence or a more workable solution.

The two most critical elements in the calendric data that bear on the problem are the distance number at A6-B8 and the calendar round, which is clearly recorded at 11 Ahaw 8 Makmak. That this is the birth of K'an-Hok'-Xul is confirmed by the verb at A10; thus, the Long Count position can be surmised to be 9.10.11.17.0.

We can further surmise that the opening date is the earlier of the two calendar round because the 11 Ahaw date follows *iwal ut,* "and then it happened," at B8. The distance number itself is very badly eroded, but in drawing it, I thought I saw 9 k'atun, 16 in front of the winal, and some number above 15 in front of the kin. The tun and its coefficient are entirely flaked off the panel.

The combined data give:

	?? K'an 12 Mak
9.??16.16	
9.10.11.17. 0	11 Ahaw 8 Mak

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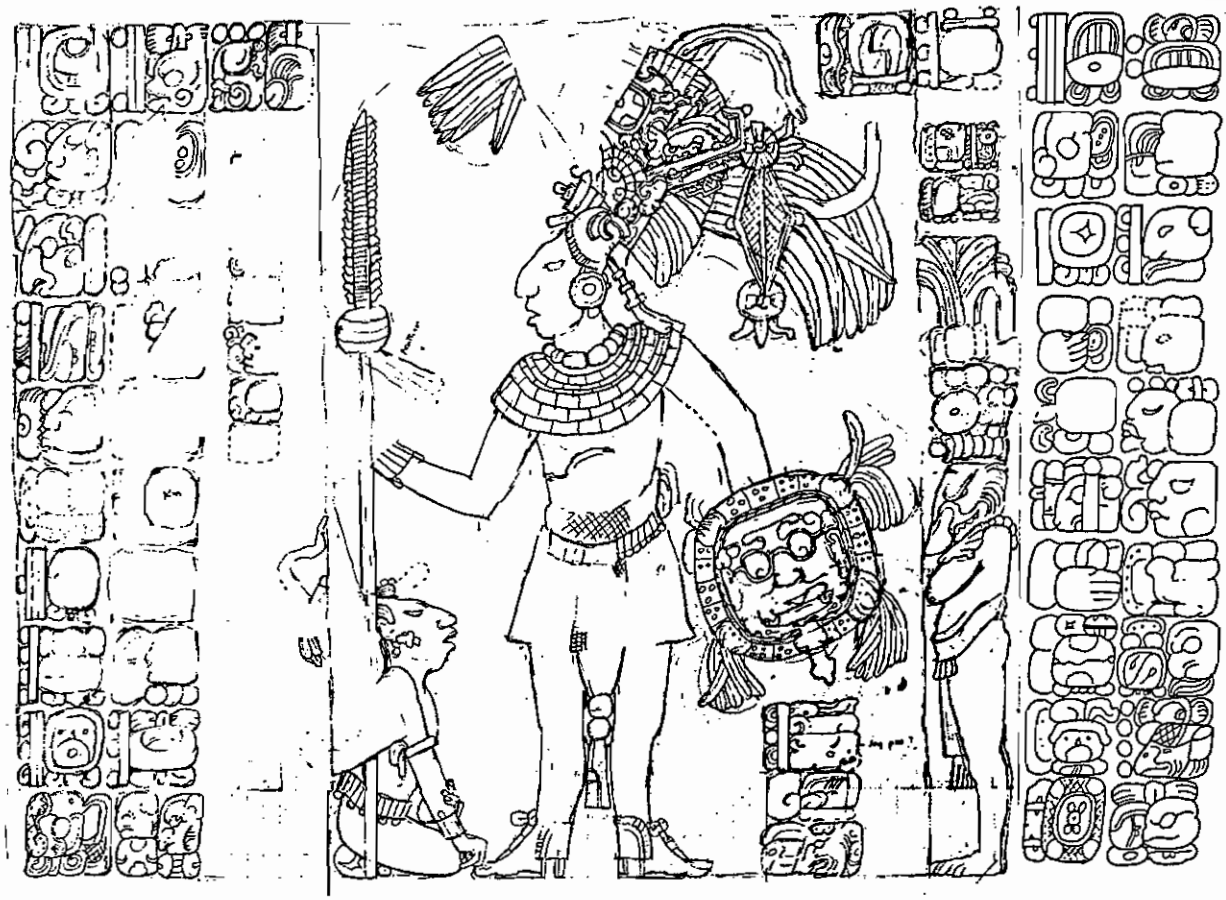

Fig. 1 Free-hand sketch drawing of the Palenque Panel

I first used my computer to calculate all the possible long count potions for ?? Kan 12 Mak between 8.16 and 9.5. Unfortunately none of them work well with the readable elements of the distance number. The coefficient of the K'an glyph must be five or above, but less that eleven; there is no room for larger numbers.

The best solution is 9.0.17.5.4 5 Kan 12 Mak, but this requires a distance number of 9.14.11.16, which violates the 16 that seems clearly to be recorded with the winal. Because of this discrepancy, I question the drawing and think that perhaps that the two middle dots of the k'atun coefficient are the remnants of an eroded filler. This gives the best solution:

9. 3.10. 0. 4 5 K'an 12 Mak
7. 1.16.16
9.10.11.17. 0 11 Ahaw 8 Mak

This date is early in the reign of Chahcal I who acceded on 9.3.6.7.17 5 Kaban 0 Zotz'.

A2-B2: These two glyphs record the verb, but I can't do much with them. A1 has the rattle-snake tail which David Stuart (personal communication, 1989) has read as *och*, "to enter." The anthropomorphic head after it may read *nal*, but unfortunately the main sign of B1 is completely gone. These two glyphs should record the verbal expression.

A3-B6: These six glyph should record the actor, but not enough remains to identify who it is. A3 appears to be the *ch'ok* title that goes with people

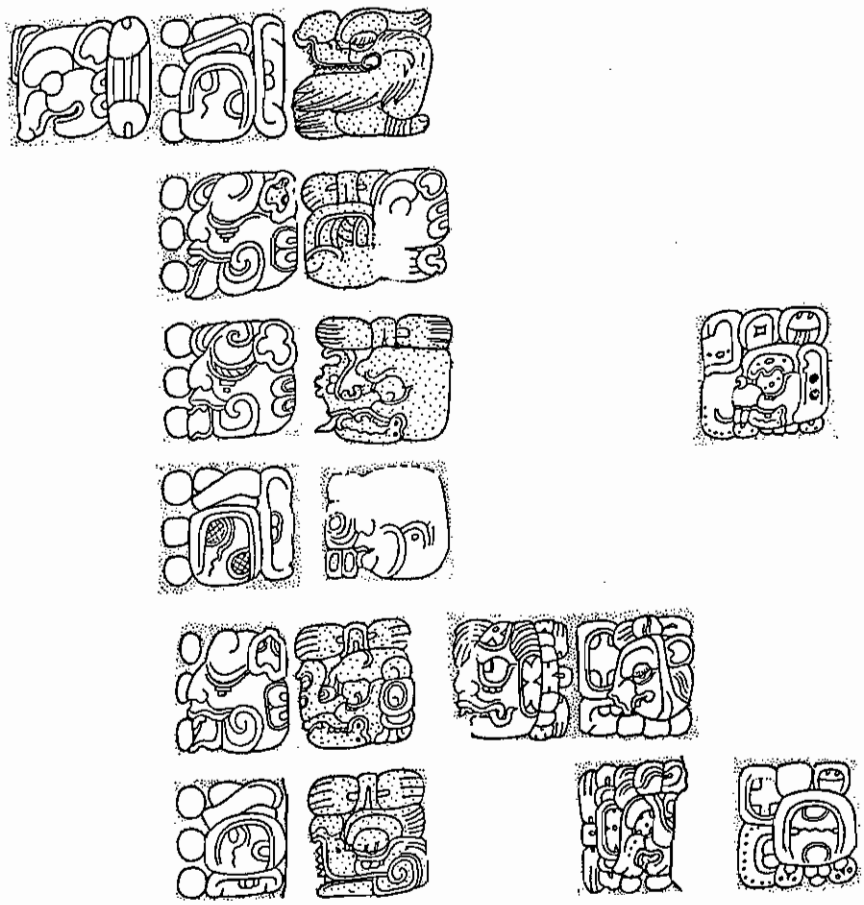

Fig. 2 K'an-Hok'-Xul's child names

who are not lineage heads; A4 appear to be a title; and, B4 may have a *mah k'ina* prefix, but the name glyph is gone.

Sentence 2:

A6: DNIG. this is probably one of the paired couplet forms of the DNIG, perhaps a kin-ak'bal pair. The final sign is T12 *ah*.

B6-A9: The coefficient of the winal at A7 seems clearly to be 16 and that of the kin to be above 15 and arithmetically must be 16. The tun is utterly destroyed, and obviously I thought when I drew it that the coefficient of the k'atun is nine. The analysis above suggests, however, that the two center dots are a filler and the number is seven, giving a distance number of 7.1.16.16.

B8: *iwal ut* "and then it came to pass.

A9-B9: 11 Ahaw 8 Makmak (9.10.11.17.0). This same date and the following event are recorded as the Initial Series of the Palace Tablet, confirming its placement in the calendar round at 9.10.11.17.0.

A10: This is the verb for "birth".

B10-C1: These four glyphs record the child names (Fig. 2) of the king K'an-Hok'-Xul. The first glyph has an animal head over a winik sign in

a title that identifies the child as a "person of a particular barrio" of Palenque. The last three glyphs are his standard child name--*ch'ok* ("unripe one"), the "ox-bat-cab" title in its head variant form, and *mat*, a title written with T74 *ma* and either T565 *ta* or the head of the Palenque Emblem Glyph Bird.

Sentence 3:

D1-G1: DNIG 8 days, 7 winals, 18 tuns, 2 k'atuns. This is the correct distance number to lead from K'an-Hok'-Xul's birth to his accession.

F2: "(after) he had been born" (This is a repetition of the previous event with its subject deleted as the base of the time count.

G2-G3: *iwal ut* 5 Lamat 6 Xul "and then it came to pass 5 Lamat 6 Xul". (The long count of this date is 9.13.10.6.8, also recorded on the Palace Tablet and the Tablet of the 96 glyphs as the accession of K'an-Hok'-Xul.)

F4-G4: both of these blocks are very badly damaged, but the T713 hand and T181 *ah* can be clearly discerned in the lower half of F4. The two upper signs are entirely gone, but their shapes and positions suggest the should be T617 and T178, the "mirror" and *la*. Through ideas from Vicky Bricker and Barbara MacLeod, I have become convinced this verb means "to tie on the headband on himself" as the expression for accession.

F5: This one is also badly damaged, but the first sign is clearly T126 and the last T130. With these two signs present, I suspect the glyph was *yahaw* or *yahaw-te'*.

G5: This begins K'an-Hok'-Xul's "child" names. This first glyph is the human personification of the "ox-bat-cab" title and the second it the *mat* title, this time is suspect with the bird head instead of T565. It is so badly damaged that either is possible.

F6: This is clearly *Mah K'ina* K'an-Hok'-Xul.

G6: This glyph puzzles me. It is an square-eyed, roman-nosed anthropomorph prefixed by a smoke-sign. I have not seen a similar glyph in other Kan-Xul name phrases, but it should be a title.

F7: This glyph seems oddly out of place, but I believe it is like the *u* "accession" *k'aba'* expressions David Stuart (personal communication, 1988) first identified. It very probably goes with the previous glyph to identify the king's name K'an-Hok'-Xul took at accession.

G7-F8: These two glyphs record the protagonist with the double emblem glyph. This couplet structure and the double emblem glyph is stylistically like the Palace Tablet.

G8: This one is perhaps the most interesting glyphs on the entire tablet. The first part is "second successor or replacement." Peter Mathews (1975) first figured out the use of these successor statements at Yaxchilan. Here the "second replacement" is followed by the *ok-k'in* combination that shows up on the Temple of Inscriptions tablets and elsewhere. This passage exactly parallels the Palace Tablet where K'an-Hok'-Xul is named as the "second successor" to the same title, but there it is written in its "k'in-bat" form.

G9-H10: "child of father, the 4-k'atun ahaw, *Mah K'ina* Pakal, *chak-te'* title."

On the Palace Tablet, the "successor" statement is followed by a distance number and a statement of Pakal's accession. Here, the equivalent successor statement is followed by a statement of parentage. Kan-Xul is declared to be the second successor since his father, while on the Palace Tablet he is the second successor since Pakal's accession.

Pakal's name is written in the style peculiar to the Palace Tablet (Fig. 3). He is declared a 4-k'atun ahaw, reflecting the number of k'atuns he

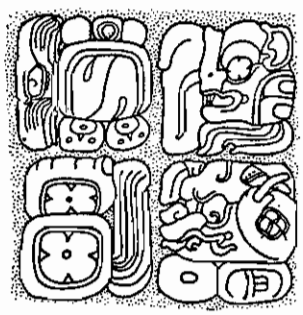

Fig. 3 Palace Tablet phrase

reigned, rather than his length of life. Most interestingly, his name ends with the "chak-te'" substitution for the "batab" title, as it does on the Palace Tablet. Here, however, the substitution includes the skull as does the substitution David Stuart have doeumented at Naranjo in Smoking Batab's name. Interestingly, the "batab" title is not one that Pakal used in earlier inscriptions at Palenque. K'an-Hok'-Xul is the only one who consistently uscd it in Pakal's names.

Secondary Texts:

I1-6: This small text is really badly damaged and I have no decipherments to offer. I suspect it names the kneeling captive.

J1-3: This texts has larger glyphs than the other secondary texts and appears to be more important. At first glance I thought that it was more likely to refer to K'an-Hok'-Xul's portrait, but its just as likely to name the creature to the right. The last glyph includes an ahaw glyph and the *hi* head variant. The first glyph has the number six, and when drawing it I had the distinet impression that the main sign is a jaguar paw. Between these two glyph is *yitah*, the glyph for sibling. I suspect it names the small figure as the sibling for someone.

L1-2: This small text is positioned as if it refer to the animal below. The first glyph is *u k'al*. The second Ah Ch'am and since *ch'amak* is the word for fox in Yucatec, I wonder if the ereature below is not a fox. I am not sure of the last two glyphs in this phrase, but it does appear to name the creature below.

The Iconography

This very important tablet documents war in a way unknown previously at Palenque. Kan-Xul stands in the center of the text holding a mean looking spear in one hand and a huge JGU shield in the other. His headdress is badly damaged, but it seems to have had the mosaic monster that is associated with war costume, espeeially at Piedras Negras as the main head. Note the jaguar ear still visible at the corner. Above the Mosaic Monster is an ancestor cartouche with an infixed Kan sign, and one of the square-nosed dragon/flap staffs angles us from the Monster.

The remnant of cross-hatching on his belt suggests he was wearing cotton armor, and his loin cloth is knotted in the style common with warrior garb. I am fairly sure that the face you see and three-quarters of the cape are recarved in modern times. I even suspect I know of the Tzeltal who did it. The forehead and nose seem to be the original outline, but the mouth and lower part of the head are too narrow.

The captive is a lovely piece of carving. He kneels before Kan-Xul with his right hand gripping his left forearm.

The creature in the other side is the oddest piece of iconography I know from Maya art. A long snouted animal (fox?) with a human body stands with his arms folded across its chest. The face has a fur ruff, but the prominent dental equipment surely identifies it as a carnivore rather than a rodent. Most strangely it wears a drummajor headdress with a huge disk on its front, almost as if we are seeing one of a pair of Tlaloc eyes. However, the center dot is much too small to be one of these Tlaloc symbols. K'an-Hok'-Xul and Pakal are given this headdress in their accession rites, but it is almost as if the headdress were too sacred to really wear at Palenque. The fox seems to be some sort of surrogate, perhaps a *way* who brings the sacred object into the scene so that we will know without doubt that K'an-Hok'-Xul was king.

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